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# THE CAUSE

Poems of the War



Laurence Binyon





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THE CAUSE  
POEMS OF THE WAR



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BY

LAURENCE BINYON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

1917

PR6003  
.I75C3  
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*Published March 1917*

1.00

MAR 20 1917

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no 1



## NOTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are due to the Editors of the periodicals, English and American, in which most of the poems in this volume originally appeared, for leave to reprint them: also to Messrs. Methuen & Co. for permission to reprint 'Europe, 1901' from *The Death of Adam, and Other Poems* (1903), and to Mr. Heinemann for permission to reprint 'Thunder on the Downs' from *Auguries* (1912).



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## PRELUDES



## EUROPE, MDCCCCI

TO NAPOLEON

SOARS still thy spirit, Child of Fire?  
Dost hear the camps of Europe hum?  
On eagle wings dost hover nigher  
At the far rolling of the drum?  
To see the harvest thou hast sown  
Smilest thou now, Napoleon?

Long had the world in blinded mirth  
Or suffering patience dreamed content,  
When lo! like thunder over earth  
Thy challenge pealed, the skies were rent:  
Thy terrible youth rose up alone  
Against the old world on its throne.

With shuddering then the peoples gazed,  
And such a stupor bound them dumb  
As those fierce Colchian ranks amazed  
Who saw the youthful Jason come,  
And challenging the War God's name  
Step forth, his fiery yoke to tame.

He took those dread bulls by the horn,  
Harnessed their fury to his will,  
And in the furrow swiftly torn  
The dragon's teeth abroad did spill:  
Behold, behind his trampling heel  
The furrow flowered into steel!

A spear, a plume, a warrior sprung —  
Armed gods in wrath by hundreds; he  
Faced all, and full amidst them flung  
His magic helmet: instantly  
Their swords upon themselves they drew,  
And shouting each the other slew.

But no Medean spell was thine,  
Napoleon, nor anointed charm;  
Thy will was as a fate divine  
To wavering men who watched thine arm  
Drive on through Europe old thy plough.  
The harvest ripens even now!

Time's purple flauntings, king and crown,  
Old custom's tall and idle weeds,  
Were tossed aside and trampled down,  
While thou didst scatter fiery seeds,



That in the gendering lap of earth  
Prepared a new world's Titan birth.

Then in thy path from underground,  
Where long benumbed in trance they froze,  
The Nations, giant forms unbound,  
Slow to their aching stature rose ;  
And through their wintry veins again  
Slow flushed the streams of life in pain.

Thy thunder, O Napoleon, passed ;  
But these whom thou hadst stirred to life,  
On them the imperious doom was cast  
Of inextinguishable strife.  
For peace they long, but blood and tears  
Still blinded the tempestuous years.

A hundred years have flown, and still  
For peace they pine ; peace tarries yet.  
These groaning armies Europe fill,  
And war's red planet hath not set.  
O mockery of peace, that gnaws  
Their hearts for so abhorred a cause !

Is peace so easy ? Nay, the names  
That are most dear and most divine

To men, are like the heavenly flames  
That farthest from possession shine.  
Peace, love, truth, freedom, unto these  
The way is through the storming seas.

Ye wakened Nations, now no more  
You battle for a monarch's whim ;  
The cause is now in your heart's core,  
Your soul must strive through every limb ;  
They who with all their soul contend  
Bear more, but to a nobler end.

Be patient in your strife ! And thou,  
O England, dearer than the rest ;  
England, with proud looks on thy brow,  
England, with trouble at thy breast,  
Seek on in patient fortitude  
Strong peace, most worthy to be wooed.

Take up thy task, O nobly born !  
With both hands grasp thy destiny.  
Easy is ignorance, easy scorn,  
And fluent pride, unworthy thee.  
Grand rolls the planet of thy fate :  
Be thy just passions also great !

Turn from the sweet lure of content,  
Rise up among the courts of ease ;  
Be all thy will as a bow bent,  
Thy sure oncoming like thy seas.  
Purge clear within thy deep desires  
To be our burning altar-fires !

Then welcome peril, so it bring  
Thy true soul leaping into light ;  
A glory for our mouths to sing  
And for our deeds to match in might,  
Till thou at last our hope enthrone  
And make indeed thy peace our own.

*January 1901*

## THE BELFRY OF BRUGES

KEEN comes the dizzy air  
In one tumultuous breath.  
The tower to heaven lies bare ;  
Dumb stir the streets beneath.

Immeasurable sky  
Domes upward from the dim  
Round land, the astonished eye  
Supposes the world's rim.

And through the sea of space  
Winds drive the furious cloud  
Silent in endless race ;  
And the tower rocks aloud.

Mine eye now wanders wide,  
My thought now quickens keen.  
O cities, far descried,  
What ravage have you seen

Of an enkindled world ?  
Homes blazing and hearths bare ;

Of hosts tyrannic hurled  
On pale ranks of despair,

Who fed with warm proud blood  
The cause unquenchable,  
For which your heroes stood,  
For which our Sidney fell ;

Sidney, whose starry fame,  
Mirrored in noble song,  
Shines, all our sloth to shame,  
And arms us against wrong ;

Bright star, that seems to burn  
Over yon English shore,  
Whither my feet return,  
And my thoughts run before ;

Run with this rumour brought  
By the wild wind's alarms,  
Dark sounds with battle fraught,  
Menace of distant arms.

O menace harsh, but vain !  
For what can peril do

But search our souls again  
To sift and find the true ?

Prove if the sap of old  
Shoots yet from the old seed,  
If faith be still unsold,  
If truth be truth indeed ?

Welcome the blast that shakes  
The wall wherein we have lain  
Slumbering, our heart awakes  
And rends the prison chain.

Turn we from prosperous toys  
And the dull name of ease ;  
Rather than tarnished joys  
Face we the angry seas !

Or if old age infirm  
Be in our veins congealed,  
Bow we to Time, our term  
Fulfilled, and proudly yield.

Not each to each we are made,  
Not each to each we fall,

But every true part played  
Quickens the heart of all

That feeds and moves and fires  
The many-peopled lands,  
And in our languor tires  
But in our strength expands.

For forward-gazing eyes  
Fate shall no terror keep.  
She in our own breast lies :  
Now let her wake from sleep !

1898

## THUNDER ON THE DOWNS

WIDE earth, wide heaven, and in the summer  
air

Silence ! The summit of the Down is bare  
Between the climbing crests of wood ; but  
those

Great sea-winds, wont, when the wet South-  
West blows,

To rock tall beeches and strong oaks aloud  
And strew torn leaves upon the streaming cloud  
To-day are idle, slumbering far aloof.

Under the solemn height and gorgeous roof  
Of cloud-built sky, all earth is indolent.

Wandering hum of bees and thymy scent  
Of the short turf enrich pure loneliness ;

Scarcely an airy topmost-twining tress  
Of bryony quivers where the thorn it  
wreathes ;

Hot fragrance from the honeysuckle  
breathes ;

And sweet the rose floats on the arching brier's  
Green fountain, sprayed with delicate frail fires.



THUNDER ON THE DOWNS 13

For clumps of thicket, dark beneath the  
blaze

Of the high westering sun, beset the ways

Of smooth grass narrowing where the slope  
runs steep

Down to green woods, and glowing shadows  
keep

A freshness round the mossy roots, and cool

The light that sleeps as in a chequered pool

Of golden air. O woods, I love you well,

I love the flowers you hide, your ferny smell ;

But here is sweeter solitude, for here

My heart breathes heavenly space ; the sky is  
near

To thought, with heights that fathomlessly  
glow ;

And the eye wanders the wide land below.

And this is England ! June's undarkened green

Gleams on far woods ; and in the vales be-  
tween

Grey hamlets, older than the trees that shade

Their ripening meadows, are in quiet laid,

Themselves a part of the warm, fruitful ground.

The little hills of England rise around ;

The little streams that wander from them  
shine

And with their names remembered names  
entwine

Of old renown and honour, fields of blood  
High causes fought on, stubborn hardihood  
For freedom spent, and songs, our noblest  
pride,

That in the heart of England never died  
And, burning still, make splendour of our  
tongue.

Glories enacted, spoken, suffered, sung !  
You lie emblazoned on this land now sleep-  
ing ;

And southward, over leagues of forest sweep-  
ing

White on the verge glistens the famous sea,  
That English wave, on which so haughtily  
Towered her sails, and one sail homeward bore  
Past capes of silently lamenting shore  
Victory's dearest dead. O shores of home,  
Since by the vanished watch-fire shields of  
Rome

Dinted this upland turf, what hearts have ached  
To see you far away, what eyes have waked

Ere dawn to watch those cliffs of long desire  
 One after one rise in their voiceless choir  
 Out of the twilight over the rough blue  
 Like music ! . . .

But now heavy gleams imbrue  
 The inland air. Breathless the valleys hold  
 Their colours in a veil of sultry gold  
 With mingled shadows that have ceased to  
 crawl ;

For far in heaven is thunder ! Over all  
 A single cloud in slow magnificence  
 Climbs like a mountain, gradual and immense,  
 With awful head unstirring, and moved on  
 Against the zenith, towers above the sun.  
 And still it thickens luminous fold on fold  
 Of fatal colour, ominously scrolled  
 And fleeced with fire ; above the sun it towers  
 Like some vast thought quickening a world not  
 ours

Remote in the waste blue, as if behind  
 Its rim were splendour that could smite us  
 blind,  
 So doom-piled and intense it crests heaven's  
 height

And mounting makes a menace of the light.

A menace ! Yes, for when light comes, we  
fear.

Light that may touch, as the pure angel-spear,  
Us to ourselves, make visible, make start  
The apparition of the very heart  
And mystery of our thoughts, awaked from  
under

The mask of cheating habit, and to thunder  
Bare in a moment of white fire what we  
Have feared and fled, our own reality.

And if a lightning now were loosed in flame  
Out of the darkness of the cloud to claim  
Thy heart, O England, how wouldst thou be  
known

In that hour ? How to the quick core be shown  
And seen ? What cry should from thy very soul  
Answer the judgment of that thunder-roll ?

I hear a voice arraign thee. " Where is now  
The exaltation that once lit thy brow ?  
Thou countest all thy ocean-sundered lands,  
Thou heapest up the labours of thy hands,  
Thou seest all thy ships upon the seas.  
But in thine own heart mean idolatries

Usurp devotion, choke thee and annul  
 Noble excess of spirit, and make dull  
 Thine eyes, enfleshed with much dominion.  
 Art thou so great and is the glory gone?  
 Do these bespeak thy freedom who deflower  
 Time, and make barren every senseless hour,  
 Who from themselves hurry, like men afraid  
 Lest what they are be to themselves betrayed?  
 Or those who in their huddled thousands  
                   sweat

To buy the sleep that helps them to forget? —  
 Life lies unused, life in its loveliness!  
 While the cry ravens still, 'Possess, Possess!'  
 And there is no possession. All the lust  
 Of gainful man is quieted in dust;  
 His faith, his fear, his joy, his doom he owns,  
 No more: the rest is parcelled with his bones  
 Save what the imagination of his heart  
 Can to the labour of his hands impart,  
 Making stones serve his spirit's desire, and  
                   breathe.

But thou, what dost thou to the world be-  
                   queath,  
 Who gatherest riches in a waste of mind  
 Unto what end, O confidently blind,

Forgetful of the things that grow not old  
And alone live and are not bought or sold ! ”

Speaks that voice truth ? Is it for this that  
great

And tender spirits suffered scorn and hate,  
Loved to the utmost, poured themselves, gave  
all

Nor counted cost, spirits imperial ?  
Where are they now, they that our memory  
guard

Among the nations ? Shall I say, enstarred  
And throned aloof ? No, not from heavens of  
thought

Watching our muddled brief procession, not  
Judges sublime above us, without share  
In our thronged ways of struggle, hope, despair,  
But in our blood, our dreams, our deeds they  
stir,

Strive on our lips for language, shame and spur  
The sluggard in us, out of darkness come  
Like summoned champions when the world is  
dumb ;

Within our hearts they wait with all they gave :  
Woe to us, woe, if we become their grave !

## THUNDER ON THE DOWNS 19

It shall not be. Darken thy pall, and trail,  
Thunder of heaven, above the valleys pale !  
Another England in my vision glows.  
And she is armed within ; at last she knows  
Herself, and what to her own soul belongs.  
Mid the world's irremediable wrongs  
She keeps her faith ; and nothing of her name  
Or of her handiwork but doth proclaim  
Her purpose. Her own soul hath made her free,  
Not circumstance ; she knows no victory  
Save of the mind : in her is nothing done,  
No wrong, no shame, no glory of any one,  
But is the cause of all and each, a thing  
Felt like a fire to kindle and to sting  
The proud blood of a nation. On her brows  
Is hope ; her body doth her spirit house  
Express and eloquent, not numb and froze ;  
And her voice echoes over sea and shore,  
And all the lands and isles that are her own  
In choric interchange and antiphon  
Answer, as fancy hears in yonder cloud  
From vale to vale repeated low and loud  
The still-suspended thunder.

Hearts of Youth,  
High-beating, ardent, quick in hope and ruth

And noble anger, O wherever now  
You dedicate your uncorrupted vow  
To be an energy of Light, a sword  
Of the ever-living Will, amid abhorred  
Din of the reeking street and populous den  
Where under the great stars blind lusts of  
men

War on each other, or escaped to hills  
Where peace the solitary evening fills,  
Or far remote on other soils of earth  
Keeping the dearness of your fathers' hearth  
On vast plains of the West, or Austral strands  
Of the warm under-world, or storied lands  
Of the orient sun, or over ocean ways  
Stemming the wave through blue or stormy  
days,

Wherever, as the circling light slopes round,  
On human lips is heard an English sound,  
O scattered, silent, hidden and unknown,  
Be lifted up, for you are not alone!  
High-beating hearts, to your deep vows be  
true!

Live out your dreams, for England lives in you.

*Midsummer 1911*



1914-1916



## THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

Now in thy splendour go before us,  
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,  
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,  
In the hour of peril purified.

The cares we hugged drop out of vision ;  
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.  
We step from days of sour division  
Into the grandeur of our fate.

For us the glorious dead have striven,  
They battled that we might be free.  
We to their living cause are given ;  
We arm for men that are to be.

Among the nations nobliest chartered,  
England recalls her heritage.  
In her is that which is not bartered,  
Which force can neither quell nor cage.

For her immortal stars are burning,  
With her the hope that's never done,

The seed that 's in the Spring's returning,  
The very flower that seeks the sun.

She fights the fraud that feeds desire on  
Lies, in a lust to enslave or kill,  
The barren creed of blood and iron,  
Vampire of Europe's wasted will . . .

Endure, O Earth ! and thou, awaken,  
Purged by this dreadful winnowing-fan,  
O wronged, untameable, unshaken  
Soul of divinely suffering man.

## ODE FOR SEPTEMBER

### I

ON that long day when England held her  
breath,

Suddenly gripped at heart

And called to choose her part

Between her loyal soul and luring sophistries,

We watched the wide, green-bosomed land  
beneath

Driven and tumultuous skies ;

We watched the volley of white shower after  
shower

Desolate with fierce drops the fallen flower ;

And still the rain's retreat

Drew glory on its track,

And still, when all was darkness and defeat,

Upon dissolving cloud the bow of peace shone  
back.

So in our hearts was alternating beat,

With very dread elate ;

And Earth dyed all her day in colours of our  
fate.

## II

But oh, how faint the image we foretold  
In fancies of our fear  
Now that the truth is here!  
And we awake from dream yet think it still a  
dream.  
It bursts our thoughts with more than thought  
can hold ;  
And more than human seem  
These agonies of conflict ; Elements  
At war ! yet not with vast indifference  
Casually crushing ; nay,  
It is as if were hurled  
Lightnings that murdered, seeking out their  
prey ;  
As if an earthquake shook to chaos half the  
world,  
Equal in purpose as in power to slay ;  
And thunder stunned our ears  
Streaming in rain of blood on torrents that are  
tears.

## III

Around a planet rolls the drum's alarm.  
Far where the summer smiles

Upon the utmost isles,  
Danger is treading silent as a fever-breath.  
Now in the North the secret waters arm ;  
Under the wave is Death :  
They fight in the very air, the virgin air,  
Hovering on fierce wings to the onset : there  
Nations to battle stream ;  
Earth smokes and cities burn ;  
Heaven thickens in a storm of shells that  
    scream ;  
The long lines shattering break, turn and  
    again return ;  
And still across a continent they teem,  
Moving in myriads ; more  
Than ranks of flesh and blood, but soul with  
    soul at war !

## IV

All the hells are awake : the old serpents hiss  
From dungeons of the mind ;  
Fury of hate born blind,  
Madness and lust, despairs and treacheries  
    unclean ;  
They shudder up from man's most dark abyss.  
But there are heavens serene

That answer strength with strength ; they  
stand secure ;

They arm us from within, and we endure.

Now are the brave more brave,

Now is the cause more dear,

The more the tempests of the darkness rave,  
As, when the sun goes down, the shining stars  
are clear.

Radiant the spirit rushes to the grave.

Glorious it is to live

In such an hour, but life is lovelier yet to give.

## v

Alas ! what comfort for the uncomforted,

Who knew no cause, nor sought

Glory or gain ? they are taught,

Homeless in homes that burn, what human  
hearts can bear.

The children stumble over their dear dead,

Wandering they know not where.

And there is one who simply fights, obeys,

Tramps, till he loses count of nights and days,

Tired, mired in dust and sweat,

Far from his own hearth-stone ;

A common man of common earth, and yet



The battle-winner he, a man of no renown,  
Where "food for cannon" pays a nation's debt.  
This is Earth's hero, whom  
The pride of Empire tosses careless to his  
doom.

## VI

Now will we speak, while we have eyes for tears  
And fibres to be wrung  
And in our mouths a tongue.  
We will bear wrongs untold but will not only  
bear ;  
Not only bear, but build through striving years  
The answer of our prayer,  
That whatsoever has the noble name  
Of man, shall not be yoked to alien shame ;  
That life shall be indeed  
Life, not permitted breath  
Of spirits wrenched and forced to others' need,  
Robbed of their nature's joy and free alone in  
death.  
The world shall travail in that cause, shall bleed,  
But deep in hope it dwells  
Until the morning break which the long night  
foretells.

## VII

O children filled with your own airy glee  
Or with a grief that comes  
So swift, so strange, it numbs,  
If on your growing youth this page of terror  
    bite,  
Harden not then your senses, feel and be  
The promise of the light.  
O heirs of Man, keep in your hearts not less  
The divine torrents of his tenderness !  
'T is ever war : but rust  
Grows on the sword ; the tale  
Of earth is strewn with empires heaped in dust  
Because they dreamed that force should punish  
    and prevail.  
The will to kindness lives beyond their lust ;  
Their grandeurs are undone :  
Deep, deep within man's soul are all his victories won.

## THE ANTAGONISTS

### I

CAVERNS mouthed with blackness more than  
night,

Fever-jungle deep in strangling brier,  
Venom-breeding slime that loathest light,  
Who has plumbed your secret? who the blind  
desire

Hissing from the viper's lifted jaws,  
Maddening the beast with scent of prey  
Tracked through savage glooms on robber paws  
Till the slaughter gluts him red and reeking?

Nay,

Man, this breathing mystery, this intense  
Body beautiful with thinking eyes,  
Master of a spirit outsoaring sense,  
Spirit of tears and laughter, who has measured  
all the skies, —

Is he also the lair  
Of a lust, of a sting  
That hides from the air  
Yet is lurking to spring

From the nescient core  
Of his fibre, alert  
At the trumpet of war  
And hungry to hurt,  
When he hears from abysses of time  
Aboriginal mutters, replying  
To something he knew not within him,  
And the Demon of Earth crying :

“I am the will of the Fire  
That bursts into boundless fury ;  
I am my own implacable desire.

“I am the will of the Sea  
That shoulders the ships and breaks them ;  
There is none other but me.”

Heavy forests bred them,  
The race that dreamed.  
In the bones of savage earth  
Their dreams had birth :  
Darkness fed them.  
And the full brain grossly teemed  
With thoughts compressed, with rages  
Obstinate, stark, obscure —

Thirsts no time assuages,  
But centuries immure.  
As the sap of trees, behind  
Crumpled bark of bossy boles,  
Presses up its juices blind,  
Buried within their souls  
The dream insatiate still  
Nursed its fierceness old  
And violent will,  
Haunted with twilight where the Gods drink  
full

Ere they renew their revelry of slaying,  
And warriors leap like the lion on the bull,  
And harsh horns in the northern mist are  
braying.

Tenebrous in them lay the dream  
Like a fire that under ashes  
Smoulders heavy-heaped and dim  
Yet with spurted stealthy flashes  
Sends a goblin shadow floating  
Crooked on the rafters — then  
Sudden from its den  
Springs in splendour. So should burst  
Destiny from dream, from thirst  
Rapture gloating

On a vision of earth afar  
Stretched for a prize and a prey ;  
And the secular might of the Gods re-risen  
Savage and glorious, waiting its day,  
Should shatter its ancient prison  
And leap like the panther to slay,  
Magnificent ! Storm, then, and thunder  
The haughty to crush with the tame,  
For the world is the strong man's plunder  
Whose coming is swifter than flame ;  
And the nations unready, decayed,  
Unworthy of fate or afraid,  
Shall be stricken and torn asunder  
Or yield in shame.

The Dream is fulfilled.  
Is it this that you willed,  
O patient ones ?  
For this that you gave  
Young to the grave  
Your valiant sons ?  
For this that you wore  
Brave faces, and bore  
The burden heart-breaking —  
Sublimely deceived,

You that bled and believed —  
For the Dream? or the Waking?

## II

No drum-beat, pulsing challenge and desire,  
Sounded, no jubilant boast nor fierce alarm  
Cried throbbing from enfevered throats afire  
For glory, when from vineyard, forge, and  
farm,

From wharf and warehouse, foundry, shop,  
and school,

From the unreaped cornfield and the office-  
stool

France called her sons ; but loth, but grave,  
But silent, with their purpose proud and hard  
Within them, as of men that go to guard  
More than life, yet to dare  
More than death : France, it was their France  
to save !

Nor now the fiery legend of old fames  
And that imperial Eagle whose wide wings  
Hovered from Vistula to Finistère,  
Who plucked the crown from Kings,  
Filled her ; but France was arming in her  
mind :

The world unborn and helpless, not the past  
Victorious with banners, called her on ;  
And she assembled not her sons alone  
From city and hamlet, coast and heath and  
hill,  
But deep within her bosom, deeper still  
Than any fear could search, than any hope  
could blind,  
Beyond all clamours of her recent day,  
Hot smouldering of the faction and the fray,  
She summoned her own soul. In the hour of  
night,  
In the hush that felt the armed tread of her  
foes,  
Like a star, silent out of seas, it rose.

Most human France ! In those clear eyes of  
light  
Was vision of the issue, and all the cost  
To the last drop of generous blood, the last  
Tears of the orphan and the widow ; and yet  
She shrank not from the terror of the debt,  
Seeing what else were with the cause undone,  
The very skies barred with an iron threat,  
The very mind of freedom lost



Beneath that shadow bulked across the sun.  
Therefore did she abstain  
From all that had renowned her, all that won  
The world's delight : thought-stilled  
With deep reality to the heart she burned,  
And took upon her all the load of pain  
Foreknown ; and her sons turned  
From wife's and children's kiss  
Simply, and steady-willed  
With quiet eyes, with courage keen and clear,  
Faced Eastward. — If an English voice she  
    hear,  
That has no speech worthy of her, let this  
Be of that day remembered, with what pride  
Our ancient island thrilled to the oceans wide,  
And our hearts leapt to know that England  
    then,  
Equal in faith of free and loyal men,  
Stept to her side.

## TO WOMEN

YOUR hearts are lifted up, your hearts  
That have foreknown the utter price.  
Your hearts burn upward like a flame  
Of splendour and of sacrifice.

For you, you too, to battle go,  
Not with the marching drums and cheers  
But in the watch of solitude  
And through the boundless night of fears.

Swift, swifter than those hawks of war,  
Those threatening wings that pulse the air,  
Far as the vanward ranks are set,  
You are gone before them, you are there!

And not a shot comes blind with death  
And not a stab of steel is pressed  
Home, but invisibly it tore  
And entered first a woman's breast.

Amid the thunder of the guns,  
The lightnings of the lance and sword

Your hope, your dread, your throbbing pride,  
Your infinite passion is outpoured

From hearts that are as one high heart  
Withholding naught from doom and bale,  
Burningly offered up, — to bleed,  
To bear, to break, but not to fail!

## FOR THE FALLEN

WITH proud thanksgiving, a mother for her  
children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill : Death august and  
royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were  
young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds  
uncounted,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left  
grow old :  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years con-  
demn.

At the going down of the sun and in the  
morning

We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades  
again ;

They sit no more at familiar tables of home ;

They have no lot in our labour of the day-  
time ;

They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes pro-  
found,

Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they  
are known

As the stars are known to the Night ;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are  
dust,

Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,

As the stars that are starry in the time of our  
darkness,

To the end, to the end, they remain.

## THE BEREAVED

WE grudged not those that were dearer than  
all we possessed,  
Lovers, brothers, sons.  
Our hearts were full, and out of a full heart  
We gave our belovèd ones.

Because we loved, we gave. In the hardest hour  
When at last — so much unsaid  
In the eyes — they went, simply, with tender  
smile,  
Our hearts to the end they read.

They to their deeds! To things that their  
soul hated  
And yet to splendours won  
From smoking hell by the spirit that moved  
in them;  
But we to endure alone.

Their hearts rested on ours; their homing  
thoughts  
Met ours in the still of the night.

We ached with the ache of the long waiting,  
and throbbed  
With the throbs of the surging fight.

O had we failed them, then were we desolate  
now  
And separated indeed.  
What should have comforted, what should have  
helped us then  
In the time of our bitter need !

But now, though sorrow be ever fresh, sor-  
row  
Is tender as love ; it knows  
That of love it was born, and Love with the  
shining eyes  
The hard way chose.

And out of deeps eternal, night and day,  
A strength our sorrow frees,  
Flooding us, full as the tide up the rivers  
flows  
From the depth of the silent seas,

A strength that is mightier far than we, yet  
a strength

Whereof our spirit is breath,  
Hope of the world, that is strange to hazard  
and fear,

And the wounds of Time, and Death.



## STRANGE FRUIT

THIS year the grain is heavy-ripe ;  
The apple shows a ruddier stripe ;  
Never berries so profuse  
Blackened with so sweet a juice  
On brambly hedges, summer-dyed.  
The yellow leaves begin to glide ;  
But Earth in careless lap-ful treasures  
Pledge of over-brimming measures,  
As if some rich unwonted zest  
Stirred prodigal within her breast.  
And now, while plenty 's left uncared,  
The fruit unplucked, the sickle spared,  
Where men go forth to waste and spill,  
Toiling to burn, destroy, and kill,  
Lo, also side by side with these  
Beast-hungers, ravening miseries,  
The heart of man has brought to birth  
Splendours richer than his earth.  
Now in the thunder-hour of fate  
Each one is kinder to his mate ;

The surly smile ; the hard forbear ;  
There 's help and hope for all to share ;  
And sudden visions of good-will,  
Transcending all the scope of ill,  
Like a glory of rare weather  
Link us in common light together,  
A clearness of the cleansing sun,  
Where none 's alone and all are one ;  
And touching each a priceless pain  
We find our own true hearts again.  
No more the easy masks deceive :  
We give, we dare, and we believe.

## THE HARVEST

RED reapers under these sad August skies,  
Proud War-Lords, careless of ten thousand  
dead,

Who leave earth's kindly crops unharvested  
As you have left the kindness of the wise  
For brutal menace and for clumsy lies,  
The spawn of insolence by bragging fed,  
With power and fraud in faith's and honour's  
stead,

Accounting these but good stupidities ;

You reap a heavier harvest than you know.  
Disnaturing a nation, you have thieved  
Her name, her patient genius, while you  
thought

To fool the world and master it. You sought  
Reality. It comes in hate and woe.  
In the end you also shall not be deceived.

## THE NEW IDOL

MAGNIFICENT the Beast ! Look in the eyes  
Of the fell tiger towering on his prey,  
Beautiful in his power to pounce and slay  
And effortless in action. He denies  
All but himself. He gloats on his weak prize,  
Roaring the anger of wild beast at bay,  
Blank anger like an element whose way  
Is mere annihilation ! Terrible eyes !

But there is one more to be feared, who can  
Escape the prison of his own wrath ; whose  
    will  
Lives beyond life ; who smiles with quiet lips ;  
Most terrible because most tender, Man, —  
Not only uncowed but irresistible  
When the cause fires him to the finger-tips.

## THE CAUSE

OUT of these throes that search and sear  
What is it so deep arises in us  
Above the shaken thoughts of fear, —  
Whatever thread the Fates may spin us, —  
Above the horror that would drown  
And tempest that would strike us down?

It is to stand in cleansing light,  
The cloud of dullard habit lifted,  
To use a certainty of sight  
And breathe an air by peril sifted,  
The things that once we deemed of price  
Consumed in smoke of sacrifice.

It is to feel the world we knew  
Changed to a wonder past our knowing;  
The grass, the trees, the skiey blue,  
The very stones are inly glowing  
With something infinite behind  
These shadows, ardently divined.

We went our ways ; each bosom bore  
Its spark of separate desire ;  
But each now kindles to the core  
With faith from this transfusing fire,  
Whereto our inmost longings run  
To be made infinitely one

With that which nothing can destroy,  
Which lives when all is crushed and taken,  
The home of dearer than our joy,  
By all save by the soul forsaken, —  
The soul that strips her clean of care  
Because she breathes her native air,

Yet not in scorn of lovely earth  
And human sweetness born of living,  
For these are grown of dearer worth,  
A gift more precious in the giving,  
Since through this raiment's hues and lines  
The glory of the spirit shines.

Faces of radiant youth, that go  
Like rivers singing to the sea !  
You count no careful cost ; you know ;  
Of that far secret you are free ;  
And life in you its splendour spending  
Sings the stars' song that has no ending.

## TO THE BELGIANS

O RACE that Cæsar knew,  
That won stern Roman praise,  
What land not envies you  
The laurel of these days?

You built your cities rich  
Around each towered hall, —  
Without, the statued niche,  
Within, the pictured wall.

Your ship-thronged wharves, your marts  
With gorgeous Venice vied.  
Peace and her famous arts  
Were yours : though tide on tide

Of Europe's battle scourged  
Black field and reddened soil,  
From blood and smoke emerged  
Peace and her fruitful toil.

Yet when the challenge rang,  
“ The War-Lord comes ; give room ! ”

Fearless to arms you sprang  
Against the odds of doom.

Like your own Damien  
Who sought that lepers' isle  
To die a simple man  
For men with tranquil smile,

So strong in faith you dared  
Defy the giant, scorn  
Ignobly to be spared,  
Though trampled, spoiled, and torn,

And in your faith arose  
And smote, and smote again,  
Till those astonished foes  
Reeled from their mounds of slain,

The faith that the free soul,  
Untaught by force to quail,  
Through fire and dirge and dole  
Prevails and shall prevail.

Still for your frontier stands  
The host that knew no dread,  
Your little, stubborn land's  
Nameless, immortal dead.



## LOUVAIN

*To Dom Bruno Destrée, O.S.B.*

### I

It was the very heart of Peace that thrilled  
In the deep minster-bell's wide-throbbing  
sound

When over old roofs evening seemed to build  
Security this world has never found.

Your cloister looked from Cæsar's rampart,  
high

O'er the fair city : clustered orchard-trees  
Married their murmur with the dreaming sky.  
It was the house of lore and living peace.

And there we talked of youth's delightful years  
In Italy, in England. Now, O Friend,  
I know not if I speak to living ears  
Or if upon you too is come the end.

Peace is on Louvain ; dead peace of spilt blood  
Upon the mounded ashes where she stood.

## II

But from that blood, those ashes there arose  
Not hoped-for terror cowering as it ran,  
But divine anger flaming upon those  
Defamers of the very name of man,

Abortions of their blind hyena-creed,  
Who for "protection" of their battle-host  
Against the unarmed of them they had made  
to bleed,  
Whose hearts they had tortured to the utter-  
most

Without a cause, past pardon, fired and tore  
The towers of fame and beauty, while they shot  
And butchered the defenceless in the door.  
But History shall hang them high, to rot

Unburied, in the face of times unborn,  
Mankind's abomination and last scorn.

## ORPHANS OF FLANDERS

WHERE is the land that fathered, nourished,  
    poured  
The sap of a strong race into your veins,  
Land of wide tilth, of farms and granaries  
    stored,  
Of old towers chiming over peaceful plains ?

It is become a vision, barred away  
Like light in cloud, a memory and belief.  
On those lost plains the Glory of yesterday  
Builds her dark towers for the bells of Grief.

It is become a splendour-circled name  
For all the world ; a torch against the skies  
Burns on that blood-spot, the unpardoned  
    shame  
Of them that conquered : but your homeless  
    eyes

See rather some brown pond by a white wall,  
Red cattle crowding in the rutty lane,

A garden where the hollyhocks were tall  
In the Augusts that shall never be again.

There your thoughts cling as the long-thrust-  
ing root

Clings in the ground ; your orphaned hearts are  
there.

O mates of sunburnt earth, your love is mute  
But strong like thirst and deeper than despair.

You have endured what pity can but grope  
To feel : into that darkness enters none.  
We have but hands to help ; yours is the hope  
Whose courage rises silent with the sun.

## TO GOETHE

GOETHE, who saw and who foretold  
A world revealed  
New-springing from its ashes old  
On Valmy field,

When Prussia's sullen hosts retired  
Before the advance  
Of ragged, starved, but freedom-fired  
Soldiers of France ;

If still those clear, Olympian eyes  
Through smoke and rage  
Your ancient Europe scrutinize,  
What think you, Sage ?

Are these the armies of the Light  
That seek to drown  
The light of lands where freedom's fight  
Has won renown ?

Will they blot also out your name  
Because you praise

All works of men that shrine the flame  
Of beauty's ways,

Wherever men have proved them great,  
Nor, drunk with pride,  
Saw but a single swollen State  
And naught beside,

Nor dreamed of drilling Europe's mind  
With threat and blow  
The way professors have designed  
Genius should go?

Or shall a people rise at length  
And see, and shake  
The fetters from its giant strength,  
And grandly break

This pedantry of feud and force,  
To man untrue,  
Thundering and blundering on its course  
To death and rue?

## YPRES

ON the road to Ypres, on the long road,  
    Marching strong,  
We'll sing a song of Ypres, of her glory  
    And her wrong.

Proud rose her towers in the old time,  
    Long ago.  
Trees stood on her ramparts, and the water  
    Lay below.

Shattered are the towers into potsherds —  
    Jumbled stones.  
Underneath the ashes that were rafters  
    Whiten bones.

Blood is in the cellar where the wine was,  
    On the floor.  
Rats run on the pavement where the wives met  
    At the door.

But in Ypres there's an army that is biding,  
    Seen of none.

You 'd never hear their tramp nor see their  
shadow  
In the sun.

Thousands of the dead men there are waiting  
Through the night,  
Waiting for a bugle in the cold dawn  
Blown for fight.

Listen when the bugle 's calling Forward !  
They 'll be found,  
Dead men, risen in battalions  
From underground,

Charging with us home, and through the foe-  
men  
Driving fear  
Swifter than the madness in a madman,  
As they hear

Dead men ring the bells of Ypres  
For a sign,  
Hear the bells and fear them in the Hunland  
Over Rhine !



## AT RHEIMS

THEIR hearts were burning in their breasts  
Too hot for curse or cries.  
They stared upon the towers that burned  
Before their smarting eyes.

There where, since France began to be,  
Anointed kings knelt down,  
There where the Maid, the unafraid,  
Received her vision's crown,

The senseless shell with nightmare scream  
Burst, and fair fragments fell  
Torn from their centuries of peace  
As by the rage of hell.

What help for wrath, what use for wail?  
Before a dumb despair  
All ancient, high, heroic France  
Seemed burning, bleeding there.

. . . . .

Within, the pillars soar to gloom  
Lit by the glimmering Rose ;  
Spirits of beauty shrined in stone  
Afar from mortal woes,

Hearing not, though their haunted shade  
Is stricken, and all around  
With splintering flash and brutal crash  
The ghostly aisles resound.

And there, upon the pavement stretched,  
The German wounded groan  
To see the dropping flames of death  
And feel the shells their own.

Too fierce the fire ! Helped by their foes  
They stagger out to air.  
The green-grey coats are seen, are known  
Through all the crowded square.

. . . . .

Ah, now for vengeance ! Deep the groan :  
A death-knell ! Quietly  
Soldiers unsling their rifles, lift  
And aim with steady eye.

But sudden in the hush between  
Death and the doomed, there stands  
Against those levelled guns a priest,  
Gentle, with outstretched hands.

*Be not as guilty as they !* he cries . . .  
Each lets his weapon fall,  
As if a vision showed him France  
And vengeance vain and small.

## TO THE ENEMY COMPLAINING

BE ruthless, then ; scorn slaves of scruple ;  
avow

The blow, planned with such patience, that  
you deal

So terribly ; hack on, and care not how  
The innocent fall ; live out your faith of steel.

Then you speak speech that we can compre-  
hend.

It cries from the unpitied blood you spill.  
And so we stand against you, and to the end  
Flame as one man, the weapon of one will.

But when your lips usurp the loyal phrase  
Of honour, querulously voluble  
Of "chivalry" and "kindness," and you praise  
What you despise for weakness of the fool,

Then the gorge rises. Bleat to dupe the dead !  
The wolf beneath the sheepskin drips too red.

## MID-ATLANTIC

If this were all ! — A dream of dread  
Ran through me ; I watched the waves that  
fled

Pale-crested out of hollows black,  
The hungry lift of helpless waves,  
A million million tossing graves,  
A wilderness without a track  
Beneath the barren moon :

If this were all !

The stars of night remotely strewn  
Looked on that restless heave and fall.  
I seemed with them to watch this old  
Bright planet through the ages rolled,  
Self-tortured, burning splendours vain  
And fevered with its greeds insane  
And with the blood of peoples red ;  
I watched it, grown an ember cold,  
Join in the dancing of the dead.

The chilly half-moon sank ; the sound  
Of naked surges roared around,

And through my heart the darkness poured  
Surges as of a sea unshored.

O somewhere far and lost from light  
Blind Europe battled in the night!

Then sudden through the darkness came  
The vision of a child,

A child with feet as light as flame  
Who ran across the bitter waves,  
Across the tumbling of the graves —  
With arms stretched out he smiled.

I drank the wine of life again,  
I breathed among my brother men,  
I felt the human fire.

I knew that I must serve the will  
Of beauty and love and wisdom still;  
Though all my hopes were overthrown,  
Though universes turned to stone,  
I have my being in this alone  
And die in that desire.

*On board the Lusitania*

*December 1914*

## THE ANVIL

BURNED from the ore's rejected dross,  
The iron whitens in the heat.  
With plangent strokes of pain and loss  
The hammers on the iron beat.  
Searched by the fire, through death and dole  
We feel the iron in our soul.

O dreadful Forge ! if torn and bruised  
The heart, more urgent comes our cry  
Not to be spared but to be used,  
Brain, sinew, and spirit, before we die.  
Beat out the iron, edge it keen,  
And shape us to the end we mean !

## GALLIPOLI

ISLES of the Ægean, Troy, and waters of Hellespont,

You we have known from of old  
Since boyhood stammering glorious Greek was entranced

In the tale that Homer told.  
There scornful Achilles towered and flamed  
through the battle  
Defying the gods; and there  
Hector armed, and Andromache proudly held  
up his boy to him,  
Knowing not yet despair.

We beheld them as presences moving beautiful and swift

In the radiant morning of Time,  
Far from reality, far from dulness of daily doing

And from cities of fog and grime, —  
Unattainable day-dream, heroes, gods and goddesses

Matched in splendour of war,



Days of a vanished world, days of a grandeur  
perished,  
Days that should bloom no more.

But now shall our boyhood learn to tell a new  
tale,

And a new song shall be sung,  
And the sound of it shall praise not magnifi-  
cence of old time

But the glory and the greatness of the young;  
Deeds of this our own day, marvellous deeds  
of our own blood ;

Sons that their sires excel,  
Lightly going into peril and taking death by  
the hand : —

Of these they shall sing, they shall tell.

How in ships sailing the famed Mediterranean  
From armed banks of Nile  
Men from far homes in sunny Austral Domin-  
ions

And the misty mother-isle,  
Met in the great cause, joined in the vast ad-  
venture,  
Saw first in April skies,

Beyond storied islands, Gallipoli's promontory,  
Impregvably ridged, arise.

And how from the belly of the black ship  
driven beneath

Towering scarp and scaur  
Hailing hidden rages of fire in terrible gusts  
On the murdered space of shore,  
Into the water they leapt, they rushed, and  
across the beach

With impetuous shout, all  
Inspired beyond men, climbed and were over  
the crest

As a flame leaps over a wall.

Not all the gods in heaven's miraculous pan-  
oply

Could have hindered or stayed them, so  
Irresistibly came they, scaled the unscaleable  
and sprang

To stab the astonished foe :  
Marvellous doers of deeds, lifted past our im-  
agining

To a world where death is nought,

As a spirit against spirit, as a liberated element,  
As fire in flesh they fought.

Now to the old twilight and pale legendary  
glories

By our own youth outdone,  
Those shores recede; not there, but in memory everlasting

The immortal heights were won.  
Of them that triumphed, of them that fell,  
there is only now

Silence and sleep and fame,  
And in night's immensity, far on that promontory's altar

The invisibly burning flame.

## THE HEALERS

IN a vision of the night I saw them,  
In the battles of the night.  
'Mid the roar and the reeling shadows of blood  
They were moving like light,

Light of the reason, guarded  
Tense within the will,  
As a lantern under a tossing of boughs  
Burns steady and still.

With scrutiny calm, and with fingers  
Patient as swift  
They bind up the hurts and the pain-writhen  
Bodies uplift,

Untired and defenceless ; around them  
With shrieks in its breath  
Bursts stark from the terrible horizon  
Impersonal death ;

But they take not their courage from anger  
That blinds the hot being ;

They take not their pity from weakness ;  
Tender, yet seeing ;

Feeling, yet nerved to the uttermost ;  
Keen, like steel ;  
Yet the wounds of the mind they are stricken  
with,  
Who shall heal?

They endure to have eyes of the watcher  
In hell, and not swerve  
For an hour from the faith that they follow,  
The light that they serve.

Man true to man, to his kindness  
That overflows all,  
To his spirit erect in the thunder  
When all his forts fall, —

This light, in the tiger-mad welter  
They serve and they save.  
What song shall be worthy to sing of  
them —  
Braver than the brave?

## EDITH CAVELL

SHE was binding the wounds of her enemies  
when they came —

The lint in her hand unrolled.

They battered the door with their rifle-butts,  
crashed it in :

She faced them gentle and bold.

They haled her before the judges where they  
sat

In their places, helmet on head.

With question and menace the judges assailed  
her, " Yes,

I have broken your law," she said.

" I have tended the hurt and hidden the hunted,  
have done

As a sister does to a brother,

Because of a law that is greater than that you  
have made,

Because I could do none other.

“Deal as you will with me. This is my choice  
to the end,

To live in the life I vowed.”

“She is self-confessed,” they cried, “she is  
self-condemned.

She shall die, that the rest may be cowed.”

In the terrible hour of the dawn, when the  
veins are cold,

They led her forth to the wall.

“I have loved my land,” she said, “but it is  
not enough :

Love requires of me all.

“I will empty my heart of the bitterness, hating  
none.”

And sweetness filled her brave

With a vision of understanding beyond the hour  
That knelled to the waiting grave.

They bound her eyes, but she stood as if she  
shone.

The rifles it was that shook

When the hoarse command rang out. They  
could not endure

That last, that defenceless look.

And the officer strode and pistolled her surely,  
ashamed

That men, seasoned in blood,  
Should quail at a woman, only a woman, —  
dead

As a flower stamped in the mud.

And now that the deed was securely done, in  
the night

When none had known her fate,  
They answered those that had striven for her,  
day by day :

“It is over, you come too late.”

And with many words and sorrowful-phrased  
excuse

Argued their German right  
To kill, most legally ; hard though the duty be,  
The law must assert its might.

Only a woman ! yet she had pity on them,

The victim offered slain  
To the gods of fear that they worship. Leave  
them there,  
Red hands, to clutch their gain.



She bewailed not herself, and we will bewail her  
not

But with tears of pride rejoice  
That an English soul was found so crystal-clear  
To be triumphant voice

Of the human heart that dares adventure all  
But live to itself untrue,  
And beyond all laws sees love as the light in  
the night,  
As the star it must answer to.

The hurts she healed, the thousands comforted — these  
Make a fragrance of her fame.  
But because she stepped to her star right on  
through death  
It is Victory speaks her name.

## THE DEPORTATION

### I

IN vain, in vain, in vain !  
Conqueror, you are conquered : though you  
grind  
These bodies, heel on neck ; and though you  
twist  
Out of them the exquisite last wrench of pain,  
They rise, they rise again,  
Rise quivering and eternally resist  
All cunning that all cruelty can find  
To mock the heart and lacerate the mind  
In vain, in vain !

### II

The train stands packed for exile, truck on truck.  
Men thronged like oxen, pressed against each  
other,  
With worse than anger in their dangerous eyes,  
Look on their drivers, armed and helmeted, —  
Then forget all in sudden stormy cries  
As past the bayonets sister, wife, and mother

Strain up to them, clutch fingers tight, are  
struck

And beaten back, but struggle and press again,  
Catch desolated kisses, fight for breath

To sob their widowed hearts out in a word  
Their man shall hear, reckless of wound or  
death

So they come nigh him ; a farewell insane,  
A passion as if the earth that bore them heard  
And in her bones groaned ! And white children  
held

On shoulders where the torn dress hangs in  
strips

Cry Father ! and mute answers wring the lips  
Of the exiles, in their torture still unquelled.

A whistle screams. The guards drive, shout,  
beat. Then

An inspiration like an ecstasy  
Seizes these women, and they rush to throw  
Their sobbing bodies prone upon the tracks  
Before the panting engine. If their men  
Into that night of slavery must go,  
They 'll be with death before them ! Prostrate  
there,

Tear-blinded, with tense arms and heaving  
backs,

Young wife and child and mother of grey hair  
Clutch the rails, anguished and athirst to die,  
While over them the towering engine throbs,  
Blind, ignorant, deaf, and ready. But you spare  
Such easiness of end, you who did this

Which the sun looked on, and which History  
Shall see for ever. Though they cling with sobs  
To their own earth, frenzied and bleeding,  
swift

They are harried up ; the bayonets prise and  
lift

And tear away their hands' despairing grasp :  
They are tossed on either side : at the engine's  
hiss

The wheels begin that road which curses pave  
Between those piteous heaps that cry and gasp  
Helpless, and cheated even of their grave.

## III

But something lives and burns  
More perilous to assail  
Than flesh of bodies frail :  
It waits and it returns.

And when in the night you dream  
Of the day that you did this thing,  
When you see those eyes and the bayonets'  
gleam  
And the shrieks to your very heart's blood  
ring  
As you do your deed in your dream again,  
The soul of the race that you racked, to do  
Your Lord's command, that you thought to  
have cowed,  
Shall sharpen the bitterness thrice for you  
As it rises before you, crying aloud :  
You did it in vain, in vain !

## THE ZEPPELIN

GUNS! far and near  
Quick, sudden, angry,  
They startle the still street.  
Upturned faces appear,  
Doors open on darkness,  
There is a hurrying of feet,

And whirled athwart gloom  
White fingers of alarm  
Point at last there  
Where illumined and dumb  
A shape suspended  
Hovers, a demon of the starry air!

Strange and cold as a dream  
Of sinister fancy,  
It charms like a snake,  
Poised deadly in the gleam,  
While bright explosions  
Leap up to it and break.

Is it terror you seek  
To exult in ? Know then  
Hearts are here  
That the plunging beak  
Of night-winged murder  
Strikes not with fear

So much as it strings  
To a deep elation  
And a quivering pride  
That at last the hour brings  
For them too the danger  
Of those who died,

Of those who yet fight  
Spending for each of us  
Their glorious blood  
In the foreign night. —  
That now we are neared to them  
Thank we God.

## THE ENGLISH GRAVES

THE rains of yesterday are flown,  
And light is on the farthest hills ;  
The homeliest rough grass by the stone  
To radiance thrills ;

And the wet bank above the ditch,  
Trailing its thorny bramble, shows  
Soft apparitions, clustered rich,  
Of the pure primrose.

The shining stillness breathes, vibrates  
From simple earth to lonely sky,  
A hinted wonder that awaits  
The heart's reply.

O lovely life ! the chaffinch sings  
High on the hazel, near and clear.  
Sharp to the heart's blood, sweetness  
springs  
In the morning here.



But my heart goes with the young cloud  
That voyages the April light  
Southward, across the beaches loud  
And cliffs of white

To fields of France, far fields that spread  
Beyond the tumbling of the waves,  
And touches as with shadowy tread  
The English graves.

There too is Earth that never weeps,  
The unrepining Earth, that holds  
The secret of a thousand sleeps  
And there unfolds

Flowers of sweet ignorance on the slope  
Where strong arms dropped and blood choked  
    breath,  
Earth that forgets all things but hope  
And smiles on death.

They poured their spirits out in pride,  
They throbbed away the price of years :  
Now that dear ground is glorified  
With dreams, with tears.

A flower there is sown, to bud  
And bloom beyond our loss and smart.  
Noble France, at its root is blood  
From England's heart.

## GOING WEST

JUST as I came  
Into the empty, westward-facing room,  
A sudden gust blew wide  
The tall window; at once  
A shock of sudden light, vibrating like a flame,  
Entered, as if it were the wind's bright spirit  
Stealing to me upon some secret quest.  
The wonder of the West  
Burst open; under dark and rushing cloud  
That rained illumined drops, it glorified  
Each corner where so dazzlingly it struck:  
The shadows cowered, the brilliance over-  
flowed.  
As suddenly, all faded.  
Wet, wild air blew in  
At the idly-swinging door  
Stormily crumpled fallen shreds of leaves,  
Dried scarlet and burnt yellow and ashy-brown:  
They fluttered in like fears and blew across  
the floor.  
And I, to the heart invaded,

Felt as that wild light palpitated through me  
And died in a moment down,  
Exalted by a visionary fear  
That from the light more than the shadow  
    fell ;  
A divination of splendid spirits near,  
Of glorious parting and of great farewell.

## FETCHING THE WOUNDED

AT the road's end glimmer the station lights;  
How small beneath the immense hollow of

Night's

Lonely and living silence ! Air that raced  
And tingled on the eyelids as we faced  
The long road stretched between the poplars  
flying

To the dark behind us, shuddering and sigh-  
ing

With phantom foliage, lapses into hush.  
Magical supersession ! The loud rush  
Swims into quiet : midnight reassumes  
Its solitude ; there's nothing but great glooms,  
Blurred stars ; whispering gusts ; the hum of  
wires.

And swerving leftwards upon noiseless tires  
We glide over the grass that smells of dew.  
A wave of wonder bathes my body through !  
For there in the headlamps' gloom-surrounded  
beam

Tall flowers spring before us, like a dream,

Each luminous little green leaf intimate  
And motionless, distinct and delicate  
With powdery white bloom fresh upon the  
stem,

As if that clear beam had created them  
Out of the darkness. Never so intense  
I felt the pang of beauty's innocence,  
Earthly and yet unearthly.

A sudden call!

We leap to ground, and I forget it all.  
Each hurries on his errand; lanterns swing;  
Dark shapes cross and re-cross the rails; we  
bring

Stretchers, and pile and number them; and  
heap

The blankets ready. Then we wait and keep  
A listening ear. Nothing comes yet; all's  
still.

Only soft gusts upon the wires blow shrill  
Fitfully, with a gentle spot of rain.  
Then, ere one knows it, the long gradual train  
Creeps quietly in and slowly stops. No sound  
But a few voices' interchange. Around  
Is the immense night-stillness, the expanse  
Of faint stars over all the wounds of France.

## FETCHING THE WOUNDED 91

Now stale odour of blood mingles with keen  
Pure smell of grass and dew. Now lantern  
sheen

Falls on brown faces opening patient eyes  
And lips of gentle answers, where each lies  
Supine upon his stretcher, black of beard  
Or with young cheeks ; on caps and tunics  
smeared

And stained, white bandages round foot or head  
Or arm, discoloured here and there with red.  
Sons of all corners of wide France ; from  
Lille,

Douay, the land beneath the invader's heel,  
Champagne, Touraine, the fisher-villages  
Of Brittany, the valleyed Pyrenees,  
Blue coasts of the South, old Paris streets.  
Argonne

Of ever smouldering battle, that anon  
Leaps furious, brothered them in arms. They  
fell

In the trenched forest scarred with reeking  
shell.

Now strange the sound comes round them in  
the night

Of English voices. By the wavering light

Quickly we have borne them, one by one, to  
the air,

And sweating in the dark lift up with care,  
Tense-sinewed, each to his place. The cars at  
last

Complete their burden : slowly, and then fast  
We glide away.

And the dim round of sky,  
Infinite and silent, broods unseeingly  
Over the shadowy uplands rolling black  
Into far woods, and the long road we track  
Bordered with apparitions, as we pass,  
Of trembling poplars and lamp-whitened grass,  
A brief procession flitting like a thought  
Through a brain drowsing into slumber;  
nought

But we awake in the solitude immense !  
But hurting the vague dumbness of my sense  
Are fancies wandering the night : there steals  
Into my heart, like something that one feels  
In darkness, the still presence of far homes  
Lost in deep country, and in little rooms  
The vacant bed. I touch the world of pain  
That is so silent. Then I see again  
Only those infinitely patient faces



In the lantern beam, beneath the night's vast  
spaces,

Amid the shadows and the scented dew ;

And those illumined flowers, springing anew

In freshness like a smile of secrecy

From the gloom-buried earth, returns to me.

The village sleeps ; blank walls, and windows  
barred.

But lights are moving in the hushed court-  
yard

As we glide up to the open door. The Chief  
Gives every man his order, prompt and brief.

We carry up our wounded, one by one.

The first cock crows : the morrow is begun.

## THE EBB OF WAR

IN the seven-times taken and retaken town  
Peace ! The mind stops ; sense argues against  
sense.

The August sun is ghostly in the street  
As if the Silence of a thousand years  
Were its familiar. All is as it was  
At the instant of the shattering : flat-thrown  
walls ;

Dislocated rafters ; lintels blown awry  
And toppling over ; what were windows, merely  
Gapings on mounds of dust and shapelessness ;  
Charred posts caught in a bramble of twisted  
iron ;

Wires sagging tangled across the street ; the  
black

Skeleton of a vine wrenched from the old  
house

It clung to ; a limp bell-pull ; here and there  
Little printed papers pasted on the wall.  
It is like a madness crumpled up in stone,  
Laughterless, tearless, meaningless ; a frenzy

Stilled, like at ebb the shingle in sea-caves  
Where the imagined weight of water swung  
Its senseless crash with pebbles in myriads  
          churned

By the random seethe. But here was flesh  
          and blood,

Seeing eyes, feeling nerves ; memoried minds  
With the habit of the picture of these fields  
And the white roads crossing the wide green  
          plain.

All vanished ! One could fancy the very fields  
Were memory's projection, phantoms ! All  
Silent ! The stone is hot to the touching hand.  
Footsteps come strange to the sense. In the  
          sloped churchyard,

Where the tower shows the blue through  
          its great rents,

Shadow falls over pitiful wrecked graves,  
And on the gravel a bare-headed boy,  
Hands in his pockets, with brown absent eyes,  
Whistles the Marseillaise : To Arms, To Arms !  
There is no other sound in the bright air.

It is as if they heard under the grass,  
The dead men of the Marne, and their thin  
          voice

Used those young lips to sing it from their  
    graves,

The song that sang a nation into arms.

And far away to the listening ear in the  
    silence

Like remote thunder throb the guns of France.

*Maurupt 1915*

## LA PATRIE

THROUGH storm-blown gloom the subtle light  
persists.

Shapes of tumultuous, ghostly cloud appear,  
Trailing a dark shower from hill-drenching  
mists ;

Dawn, desolate in majesty, is here.

But ere the wayside trees show leaf and form,  
Invisible larks in all the air around  
Ripple their songs up through the gloom and  
storm,  
As if the foiled light had won wings of sound.

A wounded soldier on his stretcher waits  
His turn for the ambulance, by the glimmer-  
ing rails.

He is wrapt in a rough brown blanket like his  
mates ;

And over him dawn broadens, the cloud pales.

Muscular, swart, bearded, and quite still,  
He lies, too tired to think, to wonder. Drops

From a leaf fall by him. For spent nerve and  
will  
The world of shattering and stunned effort  
stops.

He feels the air, song-thrilled and fresh and  
dim,  
And close about him smells the rainy soil.  
It is ever-living Earth recovers him,  
Friend and companion of old, fruitful toil.

He is patient with her patience. Hurt, he  
takes  
Strength from her rooted, still tenacities.  
Her will to heal, that secretly re-makes  
Like slumber, holds his dark, contented  
eyes.

For she, though—never reckoning of the  
cost—  
Full germs of all profusion she prepares,  
Knows tragic hours, too, parching famine,  
frost  
And wreck; and in her children's hurt she  
shares.

Build what we may, house us in lofty mind's  
Palaces, wean the fine-wrought spirit apart,  
Earth touches where the fibre throbs, and  
winds

The threads about us of her infinite heart.

And some dear ground with its own changing  
sky,

As if it were our feeling flesh, is wrought  
Into the very body's dignity  
And private colour of least conscious thought.

O when the loud invader burned and bruised  
This ordered land's old kindness, with brute  
blows

Shamed and befouled and plundered and  
abused,

Was it not Earth that in her soldier rose

And armed him, terrible and simple? He  
Takes his wound, mute as Earth is, yet as  
strong.

The funeral clouds trail, wet wind shakes the  
tree,

But all the wild air of the dawn is song.

*Latrecy 1916*

## THE DISTANT GUNS

NEGLIGENTLY the cart-track descends into the  
valley ;  
The drench of the rain has passed, and the  
clover breathes ;  
Scents are abroad ; in the valley a mist  
whitens  
Along the hidden river, where the evening  
smiles.  
The trees are asleep, their shadows are longer  
and longer,  
Melting blue in the tender twilight ; above,  
In a pallor barred with lilac and ashen cloud  
Delicate as a spirit the young moon brightens ;  
And, distant, a bell intones the hour of peace  
Where roofs of the village, grey and red,  
cluster  
In leafy dimness. Peace, old as the world !  
The crickets, shrilling in the high, wet grass,  
And gnats clouding upon the frail wild roses,  
Murmur of you. But hark ! like a shudder  
upon the air



Ominous and alien, knocking on the farther  
hills

As with airy hammers, the ghosts of terrible  
sound —

Guns! From afar they are knocking on hu-  
man hearts

Everywhere over the silent evening country,  
Knocking with fear and dark presentiment.

Only

The moon's beauty, where no life or joy is,  
Brightening softly and seeing nothing, has  
peace.

*Arc-en-Barrois* 1916

## MEN OF VERDUN

THERE are five men in the moonlight  
That by their shadows stand.  
Three hobble humped on crutches,  
And two lack each a hand.

Frogs somewhere near the roadside  
Chorus their chant absorbed :  
But a hush breathes out of the dream-light  
That far in heaven is orbéd.

It is gentle as sleep falling  
And wide as thought can span,  
The ancient peace and wonder  
That brims the heart of man.

Beyond the hills it shines now  
On no peace but the dead,  
On reek of trenches thunder-shocked,  
Tense fury of wills in wrestle locked,  
A chaos crumbled red !

The five men in the moonlight  
Chat, joke, or gaze apart.  
They talk of days and comrades,  
But each one hides his heart.

They wear clean cap and tunic  
As when they went to war ;  
A gleam comes where the medal's pinned ;  
But they will fight no more.

The shadows maimed and antic  
Gesture and shape distort,  
Like mockery of a demon dumb  
Out of the hell-din whence they come  
That dogs them for his sport :

But as if dead men were risen  
And stood before me there  
With a terrible fame about them blown  
In beams of spectral air,

I see them now, transfigured  
As in a dream, dilate  
Fabulous with the Titan-throb  
Of battling Europe's fate.

For history 's hushed before them,  
And legend flames afresh ;  
Verdun, the name of thunder,  
Is written on their flesh.

## ENGLAND'S POET

To other voices, other majesties,  
Removed this while, Peace shall resort again.  
But he was with us in our darkest pain  
And stormiest hour : his faith royally dyes  
The colours of our cause ; his voice replies  
To all our doubt, dear spirit ! heart and vein  
Of England's old adventure ! his proud strain  
Rose from our earth to the sea-breathing skies.

Even over chaos and the murdering roar  
Comes that world-winning music, whose full  
stops

Sounded all man, the bestial and divine ;  
Terrible as thunder, fresh as April drops.  
He stands, he speaks, the soul-transfigured  
sign

Of all our story, on the English shore.

## THE SIBYLS

RENDING the waters of a night unknown  
The ship with tireless pulses bore me,  
On the shadowy deck musing late and lone,  
Over waste ocean.

The rustling of the cordage in the dewy wind  
And the sound of idle surges  
Falling prolonged and for ever again up-  
thrown  
Drowsed me ; I slept, I dreamed.

Out of the seas that streamed  
In ghostly turbulence moving and glimmer-  
ing about me  
I saw the rising of vast and visionary forms.

Like clouds, like continents of cloud, they rose,  
August as the shape of storms  
In the silence before the thunder, or of moun-  
tains  
Alone in a sky of sunken light : they rose  
Slowly, with shrouded grandeur

Of queenly bosom and shoulder ; and afar  
Their countenances were lifted, although  
    veiled,  
Although heavy as with thought and with silence,  
In the heights where dimly gathered  
Star upon solitary star.

And it seemed to me, as I dreamed,  
That these were the forms of the Sibyls of  
    old,  
Prophetesses whose eyes were aflame with interior fire,  
Who passionately prophesied and none comprehended,  
In the womb of whose thought was quickened  
    the world's desire,  
Who saw, and because they saw, chastised  
With voices terribly chanting on the wind  
The folly of the faithlessness of men.

But not as they haunted then  
In cavernous and wild places,  
Each inaccessibly sequestered  
And sought with furtive steps

Through wizard leaves of whispering laurel  
feared,

Now to me they appeared.

But rather like Queens of fabulous dominion,  
Like Queens, voices of a voiceless people,  
Queens of old time, with aweing faces,  
With burdened brows but with proud eyes,  
Assembled in solemn parley, to shape  
Futurity and the nations' glory and doom,  
They were met in the night together.

And lo! beneath them

The immeasurable circle of the gloom

Phantasmally disclosed

In apparition all the coasts of the world,

Veined with rivers afar to the frozen moun-  
tains.

And I saw the shadow of maniac Death

Like a reveller there stagger gluttoned and  
gloating.

I saw murdered cities

That raised like a stiffened arm

One blackened tower to heaven; I saw

Processions of the homeless crawling into the  
distances;



And sullen leagues of interminable battle ;  
And peoples arming afar ; the very earth,  
The very bowels of the earth infected  
With the rages and the agonies of men.  
For a moment the vision gleamed, and then  
                  was gone.

Gloom rushed down like rain.  
But out of the midst of the darkness  
My flesh was aware of a sound,  
The peopled sound of moving millions  
And the voices of human pain.

I lifted my gaze to the Sibyls,  
The Sibyls of the Continents, where they rose  
Looking one on another.  
Ancestral Asia, mother of musing mind,  
Was there ; and over against her  
Towered in the gates of the West a shape  
Of youth gigantic, troubled and vigilant ;  
Patient with eager dumbness in dark eyes,  
Africa rose ; and ardent out of the South  
The youngest of those great sisters ; and proud,  
With fame upon her for mantle, and regal-  
                  browed,  
The stature of Europe old.

It seemed they listened to the murmur  
Of the anguished lands beneath them  
In sombre reverberation rising and upward  
rolled.

Everywhere battle and arming for battle,  
Famine and torture, odour of burning and blood,  
Doubt, hatred, terror,  
Rage and lamenting!

I heard sweet Pity crying between the earth  
and sky :  
But who had leisure for her call? or who  
hearkened to her cry?

Not with our vision, and not with our horizon  
The gaze of the Sibyls was filled.  
Their trouble was trouble beyond the shaping  
of our fear,  
Their hope full-sailed upon oceans beyond our  
ken ;  
Their thoughts were the thoughts that build  
Towers for the dawn unseen.

But nearer than ever before  
They drew to each other, sister to shrouded  
sister,

Queen to superb Queen.

What counsel took they together? or what  
word

Of power and of parturition

Passed their lips? What saw they,

Conferring among the stars?

My blood tingled, and I heard

Syllables, O too vast

For capacity of my ears; yet within me,

In the innermost bones and caves of my  
being

I felt a voice like the voice of a sea,

And the sound of it seemed to be crying:

“Endure!

Humble yourselves, O dreamers of dreams,

In whose bosom is peril fiercer than fire or  
beast,

Humble yourselves, O desolaters of your  
own dreams,

Then arise and remember!

Though now you cry in astonishment and an-  
guish

‘What have we done to the beauty of the  
world

That ruins about us in ashes and blood?’

Remember the Spirit that moulded and made  
you

In the beauty of the body  
Shaped as the splendour of speech to thought,  
The Spirit that wills with one desire,  
With infinite else unsatisfied desire,  
Peace not made by conquerors and armies,  
Peace born in the soul, that asks not shelter  
or a pillow.

The peace of truth, unshaken amid the thunder,  
Unaffrighted by fury of shrivelling fire,  
And neither time nor tempest,  
Neither slumber nor calamity,  
Neither rending of the flesh nor breaking of  
the heart,  
Shall stay you from that desire."

That sound floated like a cloud in heaven,  
Lingering ; and like an answer  
Came the sound of the rushing of spirits  
triumphant,  
Of young men dying for a cause.

I lifted my eyes in wonder,  
And silence filled me.

And with the silence I was aware  
Of a breath moving in the glimmer of the air.  
The stars had vanished ; but again  
I beheld those Sibyls august  
Over stilled ocean,  
And on their faces the dawn.  
Even as I looked they lifted up their heads,  
They lifted their heads, like eagles  
That slowly shake and widen their wondrous  
wings ;  
They arose and vanished like the stars.  
The light of the changed world, the world  
new-born,  
Brimmed over the silence of the seas ;  
But even in the rising of its beam  
I remembered the light in their eyes.

## BEFORE THE DAWN

BLACKER the night grows ere the dawn be  
    risen,

Keener the cost, and fiercer yet the fight.  
But hark! above the thunder and the terror  
A trumpet blowing splendid through the night.

It is the challenge of our dead undying,  
Calling, *Remember! We have died for you.*  
It is the cry of perilled earth's hereafter —  
Sons of our sons — *Be glorious! Be true!*

Now in the hour when either world is witness,  
Never or now shall we be proven great,  
Rise to the height of all our strain and story,  
Aye, and beyond! For we ourselves are Fate.

## TO THE END

BECAUSE the storm has stript us bare  
Of all things but the thing we are,  
Because our faith requires us whole,  
And we are seen to the very soul,  
Rejoice! From now all meaner fears are fled.

Because we have no prize to win  
Auguster than the truth within,  
And by consuming of the dross  
Magnificently lose our loss,  
Rejoice! We have not vainly borne and bled.

Because we chose beyond recall  
And for dear honour hazard all,  
And summoned to the last attack  
Refuse to falter or look back,  
Rejoice! We die, the Cause is never dead.

THE END

**The Riverside Press**  
**CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS**  
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